

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 5965

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TAGS MNUC TW

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SHEN TO DISCUSS
RECENT PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING REPROCESSING ON TAIWAN.

REF: (A) STATE 214981; (B) TAIPEI 5907

1. I MET WITH CHINESE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SHEN CH'ANG-HUAN AT HIS REQUEST AT NOON TODAY TO DISCUSS
RECENT US PRESS REPORT THAT THE ROC IS SECRETLY REPROCESSING
NUCLEAR FUEL ELEMENTS TO PRODUCE WEAPONS
MATERIAL. IN HIS INTRODUCTORY REMARKS, SHEN STATED
THAT US MEDIA, INCLUDING THE WASHINGTON POST, THE NEW YORK TIMES,
THE BALTIMORE SUN AND VARIOUS TELEVISION STATIONS, HAVE CARRIED
STORIES ACCUSING THE ROC OF SECRETLY REPROCESSING SPENT URANIUM FUEL.
THE ROC AMBASSADOR TO THE US, JAMES SHEN, AS WELL AS MINISTER
SHEN, HAVE DENIED THESE REPORTS TO CBS, NBC AND UPI.

2. MINISTER SHEN EMPHASIZED THAT PREMIER CHIANG
CHING-KUO HAS CLEARLY EXPRESSED IN THE PAST, AND
WISHES TO REITERATE THAT: (A) THE ROC IS UNCHANGING
IN ITS POSITION NOT TO MAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS;

(B) INSTALLATIONS IN THE ROC ARE CURRENTLY UNDER THE
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SAFEGUARDS AND SUPERVISION OF THE IAEA, AND A RECENT

IAEA INSPECTION PROVED THAT THE ROC IS CONFORMING TO THESE SAFEGUARDS REGULATIONS; (C) FROM THE VERY BEGINNING THE ROC HAS BEEN PARTY TO THE NON-PROLIFERATION TRATY, AND ADHERES TO ITS TERMS; AND (D) ROC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD IS ENTIRELY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO THE ISLAND'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WHICH DEPEND ON THE SUPPLY OF FUEL FROM THE US.

3. MINISTER SHEN STATED THAT THE US EMBASSY IN TAIPEI IS WELL AWARE OF ROC ACTIVITIES IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD, AND THAT CLOSE COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION IS MAINTAINED BY THE EMBASSY WITH SUCH OFFICIALS AS CHENG CHEN-HUA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CHINESE AEC. HE REQUESTED ME TO INFORM THE STATE DEPARTMENT THAT THE ROC'S BASIC POLICY IS NOT TO MAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND THAT THIS POSITION HAS NOT CHANGED.

4. MINISTER TOOK EXCEPTION TO CERTAIN FUNSETH RESPONSES WHICH HE SAID WERE PHRASED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO IMPLY THAT (A) NOT ONLY WAS THE ROC ENGAGED IN NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING, BUT (B) IT WAS SO ENGAGED DESPITE "STRONG OPPOSITION" OF THE US GOVERNMENT.

5. I RESPONDED THAT MR. FUNSETH'S COMMENTS ALSO RECOGNIZED THE CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENTS WHICH THE GROC HAS MADE. THE PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IS A SERIOUS ONE, AND HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF HEATED DEBATE BOTH IN THE US AND ABROAD. US OFFICIALS ARE OBLIGED TO SPEAK CLEARLY ON THIS MATTER. I REMINDED THE MINISTER OF THE RECENT PRESS REPORTS ON US CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION THROUGH NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING IN BOTH PAKISTAN AND IRAN AND EARLIER IN BRAZIL. I EXPLAINED THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN GENERAL, AND THE MEDIA IN PARTICULAR, ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO THIS SUBJECT; AND THAT AMERICAN OFFICIALS AT HOME AND ABROAD HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE NOT TO ALLOW FURTHER PROLIFERATION. I ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT I WOULD NOT BE MISUNDERSTOOD WHEN I SAID THAT US OFFICIALS AS WELL AS THE MEDIA HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO BE SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR PROLIFERATION IN THE ROC, AS IN ANY OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRY, BECAUSE ONCE IT BEGINS THERE IS NO TURNING BACK.

6. MINISTER REPEATED HIS ASSURANCES THAT THE ROC HAS NO PLANS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THE REPROCESSING FOR WEAPONS PURPOSES AS DESCRIBED IN THE PRESS RELEASES, THAT THE ROC WISHES TO COOPERATE WITH THE US IN EVERY WAY, AND THAT HE HOPED I WOULD REITERATE PREMIER CHIANG'S FOUR POINTS TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT SO THAT FUTURE COOPERATION IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED. MINISTER MENTIONED THE RECENT IAEA INSPECTION OF ROC FACILITIES AT THE INSTITUTE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY RESEARCH (INER), AND THE FACT THAT NO MAJOR IRREGULARITIES WERE NOTED. HE REPEATED HIS CONCERN THAT THE STATE

DEPARTMENT MUST BE AWARE OF THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION, AND NOT BE MISLEAD BY "WILD REPORTS" IN THE MEDIA. HE OFFERED THE INVITATION THAT IF THERE WERE ANY FURTHER PROBLEMS RLATIVE TO THIS SITUATION, THE EMBASSY "ALWAYS CAN COME TO US".

7. I REPLIED THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WERE ANY MISUNDER-
STANDINGS ON THIS SITUATION BUT THAT I WOULD KEEP HIS INVITATION
IN MIND. US/ROC COOPERATION IN NUCLEAR MATTERS HAS BEEN PRODUCTIVE,
AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CAEC HAVE BEEN OPEN AND COMPLETE.
THE TAIPOWER NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS ARE ADVANCING RAPIDLY, AND
OUR DECISION ON THE OCTOBER 1975 REQUEST TO DISSOLVE TEN PLATES
OF FUEL FROM THE TSING-HUA UNIVERSITY REACTOR IN ORDER PUT
INTO OPERATION PILOT REPROCESSING PLANT IS BEING CONSIDERED AND
I WOULD URGE THAT AN ANSWER BE PROVIDED SOON.
UNGER

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